

Amplifying Voices of Young Refugee Girls: Lensa Ali/Communications Intern at GirlForward

Introduction/GirlForward

“The Social Justice Internship Program is a year-long, 250–275 hour internship experience. Students will have the opportunity to engage in significant work at one of four Chicago area nonprofits: Misericordia, Catholic Charities, ONE Northside, and GirlForward.”

When it comes to understanding the mission statement of GirlForward, it is known to be “a community of support dedicated to creating and enhancing opportunities for girls who have been displaced by conflict and persecution.” GirlForward uses three core programs to assist refugee girls in navigating their identities. These programs are known as the Mentoring Program, the Education Program and the Safe Spaces Program. They each serve the girls by allowing them to build skills, explore their strengths/weaknesses, and gain access to academic resources for the future. As a Communications Intern at GirlForward, I worked to develop content for the organization’s social media platforms and gathered relevant news articles to keep information up to date for the broader community. I also edited blog posts and added events that related to refugee/immigrant issues, wellness, and education to the website’s event calendar. Through my internship this semester, I’ve learned the value of nonprofit organizations in the way that they spread awareness through social media. Social media is a spectacular tool to reach a wide range of audiences from different backgrounds. GirlForward takes advantage of this by having multiple social media accounts and consistently posting content to raise awareness. Whether the content they posted showcased what’s going on in the world in relation to refugees or an interesting story about the young girls within the organization, it would ultimately be original and insightful.

Personal Project



For my personal project, I created a podcast interview with my father that explains his life growing up in Ethiopia and all the obstacles he faced. I also wanted to share his perspective on the Oromo protests that happened during summer 2020 and his participation in them. The purpose of this project was to tell a story of a refugee living in America who has experienced a culture shock like many who come from refugee or immigrant backgrounds. I believe those who have resettled in the US can find a connection to his story since it isn’t easy to resettle in a new environment where you don’t speak the language and you are expected to have a smooth transition in the community. The added struggle of leaving your loved ones behind in your home country to chase a goal that can better your immediate families life, is also difficult. This can be understood and appreciated through the story shared and give a new perspective to those who haven’t encountered a similar life story. Whether the listener can relate with the subject’s experience or they just want to learn more about what it’s like to be an immigrant/refugee in America, I hope this interview will give the audience a chance to reflect on their own experiences.



Learning Objectives

- While interning at GirlForward, I will develop a better understanding of my role as a Communications intern at a nonprofit organization and facilitate activities in which others can contribute their own ideas.
- While interning at GirlForward, I will follow the communication guidelines and quotas to the best of my ability and ensure that all information I post is accurate.
- While interning at GirlForward, I will take on more leadership tasks and demonstrate/emphasize values that are fundamental in this organization.

Reflection

Despite my internship being entirely remote and not getting to meet all the wonderful members of the organization, I felt a strong sense of community through the many online events and meetings held on zoom. The diverse opportunities and safe spaces present for the young girls in GirlForward are wonderful to be apart of. I’m very fortunate to have experienced and learned the importance of inclusive spaces for young refugee girls. The ability to explore various topics that relate to refugee resettlement and girls’ education has been eye-opening and I am able to better understand the resources necessary to amplify the voices of young refugee girls.